



Visitors to the University  
Guidance on immigration considerations

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## 1. Introduction

Immigration arrangements for international visitors to the University can be complex, depend on a number of factors and have restrictions on activities while the visitor is here.

The term “Academic Visitor” has a distinct meaning in an immigration context which may differ from that commonly used in UK higher education; **the visiting title itself doesn’t determine what type of visa someone needs**. In this guidance, the term is only used in an immigration context. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [guidance on visiting titles](#).

**Managers: if you’re planning to invite anyone from overseas to the University, please speak to your [Faculty HR team](#) as early as possible to make sure it all goes smoothly. You can also contact [immigration@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:immigration@leeds.ac.uk). If study will be involved in any way, please contact the [International Student Advice Team](#) for advice.**

## 2. Who needs a visa?

Anyone who is not a British or Irish citizen may need permission to visit the UK.

### Visa nationals

**Always need some form of permission in advance to enter the UK**

The relevant countries are listed in [Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Visa national list](#). Anyone from the listed countries needs to have a visa to enter the UK before travelling, whatever the reason (unless listed under “Exceptions to the list of visa nationals”).

### Non-visa nationals

**May or may not need some form of visit visa in advance to enter the UK depending on the circumstances of the visit**

Non-visa nationals are people from any country which isn’t listed in [Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Visa national list](#). Examples (but not an exhaustive list) of non-visa national countries include:

Argentina	Brunei	Hong Kong	Mexico	Switzerland
Australia	Canada	Japan	Namibia	USA
Botswana	Chile	Macao	New Zealand	South Korea
Brazil	<a href="#">EEA countries</a>	Malaysia	Singapore	

### *Non-visa nationals visiting for 6 months or less*

Applying for a visa in advance of travelling to the UK isn’t necessary, though it does provide a bit more certainty and is recommended by UKVI if the person has a criminal record or has previously been refused entry into the UK.

Nationals of EEA countries and Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and the USA, along with members of the Registered Traveller Service can use passport eGates when they arrive in the UK as long as they have a biometric symbol on the cover of their passport and are age 12 or over.

Anyone who does not meet the above criteria will need to see a border officer and request permission to enter the UK in the form of a ‘wet ink’ stamp in a passport.

A border officer may ask for evidence of the following in addition to a valid passport/other travel document:

- You are eligible for the activities you want to do
- You have arranged accommodation for your stay
- You will leave at the end of your visit
- You are able to support yourself and your dependents during your trip (or have funding from someone else to support you)

We should always provide a letter of invitation from the University which states the reason for the visit and travel dates. This can be requested from your school contact or faculty HR.

### *Non-visa nationals visiting for more than 6 months*

For visits of more than 6 months, a visa is always required before travelling.

UKVI has a useful tool for checking visa requirements at <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>. Please bear in mind that a result that says “You do not need a visa for some business and academic activities” just means that a visa is not required before travelling.

### 3. Staff or student visitor?

Ask the following questions:

Question	Yes	No
a) Is the visitor a current PhD student at an overseas institution?	Go to question b	This is a <b>staff visitor</b>
b) Is the visitor also a member of staff at their home university?	Go to question c	This is a <b>student visitor</b>
c) Is the visitor coming to the University to work on research for their own PhD?	This is a <b>student visitor</b>	This is a <b>staff visitor</b>

Essentially, the visitor is a **student** if registered on a course overseas and coming to the University to carry out activities which will contribute directly to their studies (they should be registered with the University on a Miscellaneous PhD Programme). They may need to pay a [tuition fee](#).

Those who visit as **staff** may need to pay a bench fee (these are at the discretion of, and determined by, individual schools/research projects).

It is likely that, whatever the reason for the visit, there will be an element of collaboration at some point. In determining the right visa type, the questions to ask are:

#### 1. Who is directing what activities will be undertaken?

If this is a PI or someone else at the University, then the visitor is likely to need a Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange visa (T5) visa. If the visitor will principally be doing their own research and will mainly benefit, they are likely to need a Standard Visitor visa.

#### 2. What is the main purpose of the visit?

See the activities in the first column overleaf.

### 4. Potential consequences of choosing the wrong visa type

- A £20,000 fine per illegal migrant
- Downgrading of our sponsor licences to ‘B’ rating, meaning we wouldn’t be able to sponsor any new migrants
- Removal of our sponsor licences, meaning all of our sponsored migrants would need to leave the UK immediately
- Repercussions for our Student visa licence, affecting international students as b) and c) above would affect staff
- A custodial sentence

Examples of visa types and when to use them are overleaf, followed by the options (including restrictions) in more detail.

## 5. Visa types for visitors and when to use them

Activity which is the <u>main purpose</u> of the visit		Visa type required	Maximum length	Visa Conditions	Is a visa needed in advance?
<b>Undertake a lecture/series of lectures and/or examine students</b> (see below if this is for more than one month)		Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE)	1 month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No limitations on payment amount or source (HR should advise on the appropriate level of payment)</li> <li>Invitation letter from host department required</li> <li>Can't extend or switch to another visa</li> </ul>	<p><u>Visa nationals</u> must always have a visa before coming to the UK.</p> <p><u>Non-visa nationals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can seek entry at the UK border as for a PPE or Standard Visitor visa</li> <li><b>must apply in advance for a Temporary Worker – GAE (T5) visa or where entry as an Academic Visitor is needed for more than 6 months</b></li> </ul>
<b>Chair an interview panel</b>					
<b>Attend a meeting, conference or interview</b>		Standard Visitor visa (Business)	6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can't receive payment from any UK source (except for reasonable travel and subsistence expenses)</li> <li>Invitation letter from host department required</li> <li>Can't extend beyond 6 months <u>except</u> Academic Visitors, who can hold a visa for a maximum of 12 months</li> </ul>	
<b>Share knowledge/experience <u>but not conduct research</u></b>					
<b>Conduct research</b>	<b>Private research for own purposes</b> (ie not as part of a course of study/employment)	Standard Visitor visa (Academic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 months if sought at UK border</li> <li>12 months if obtained in advance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sponsorship by the University required</li> <li>Funding must equal at least UK National Minimum Wage and can come from any source except individual (includes savings, friends, family)</li> <li>Not normally employed by University of Leeds</li> <li>Role cannot be a "genuine vacancy" – must be over and above normal staffing requirements, not automatically refilled once post holder leaves</li> </ul>	
	<b>Collaborative research</b> (ie collaborating/working with University staff)	Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange visa (T5)	2 years		
<b>Undertake a series of lectures</b> (mustn't amount to a formal teaching post)		Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange visa (T5)	2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sponsorship by the University required</li> <li>Funding must equal at least UK National Minimum Wage and can come from any source except individual (includes savings, friends, family)</li> <li>Not normally employed by University of Leeds</li> <li>Role cannot be a "genuine vacancy" – must be over and above normal staffing requirements, not automatically refilled once post holder leaves</li> </ul>	
<b>Examine students</b>					

Activity which is the <u>main purpose</u> of the visit		Visa type required	Maximum length	Visa Conditions	Is a visa needed in advance?
Study	<b>Where this is <u>in addition to carrying out a researcher role</u></b>	Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange visa (T5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsorship by the University required</li> <li>• Funding must equal at least UK National Minimum Wage and can come from any source except individual (includes savings, friends, family)</li> <li>• Not normally employed by University of Leeds</li> <li>• Role cannot be a “genuine vacancy” – must be over and above normal staffing requirements, not automatically refilled once post holder leaves</li> <li>• Can study while researching, but <u>this can't be the primary purpose of the visit</u>, and it can't interfere with the purpose of the engagement as defined on the CoS</li> </ul>	<b>- Applications for Student and Short Term Study visas must always be made in advance by both visa nationals and non-visa nationals</b>
	<b>A short period of research or study, or take a viva</b>	Standard Visitor visa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study must be credible and at an accredited institution</li> <li>• An ATAS certificate may be required (see <a href="#">Immigration Rules Appendix ATAS</a>)</li> <li>• No part time course for longer than 6 months</li> </ul>	
	<b>Recreational study</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covers courses for leisure purposes that do not lead to a formal qualification</li> <li>• Provider cannot be a state-funded school or academy</li> </ul>	
	<b>Studying English (6-11 months only)</b>	Short term study visa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6-11 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See <a href="https://www.gov.uk/visa-to-study-english">https://www.gov.uk/visa-to-study-english</a></li> </ul>	
	<b>Full time study</b>	Student	Depends on course length and study already completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See <a href="https://www.gov.uk/student-visa">https://www.gov.uk/student-visa</a></li> </ul>	

If the activity you're looking for isn't listed here, please check the detailed guidance which follows.

## 6. Standard visitor

The Standard Visitor visa has several sub-groups which include:

- tourism, for example on a holiday or to see your family and friends
- business, for example attending a meeting
- to do a short course of study
- to take part in research or an exchange programme as an academic

Please check [Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Permitted Activities](#) for activities which are allowed to be undertaken in the UK by a Standard Visitor Visa holder; these are grouped as follows:

- Clients of UK export companies
- Creative
- General Business Activities
- Intra-corporate Activities
- Legal
- Manufacture and supply of goods to the UK
- Medical treatment and organ donation
- Overseas roles requiring specific activities in the UK
- Religion
- Science and academia
- Sports
- Study as a Visitor
- Tourism and Leisure
- Transit
- Volunteering
- Work-related training

A Standard Visitor visa holder cannot:

- do paid or unpaid work for a UK company or as a self-employed person
- live in the UK for long periods of time through frequent visits
- claim public funds (state benefits)
- do a course of study that lasts longer than 6 months
- marry or register a civil partnership, or give notice of marriage or civil partnership (a Marriage Visitor visa is required instead)

Additional conditions per visitor type are noted below.

### Standard Visitor (tourism and leisure)

- Visiting a student (but not studying) or attend a graduation ceremony is also permitted.
- If any type of work or work-like activity is to be carried out on University premises, or elsewhere on behalf of the University, this type of visa is not suitable.

### Standard Visitor (academic)

- The definition of Academic Visitor in an immigration context may differ from that commonly used in UK HEIs. The title of Academic Visitor does not determine what type of visa someone needs.
- Academic Visitor visa applicants must evidence that they are:
  - highly qualified in their field of expertise, and
  - currently be working in their field of expertise at an academic institution or institution of higher education overseas.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Students from overseas universities cannot enter the UK on an Academic Visitor visa. Overseas students should enter the UK either on Standard Visitor, Student or Short Term Student as appropriate..

### **The main purpose of the visit might be to:**

- carry out research for their own purposes (eg researching a book or publication) while on sabbatical leave from their home institution
- gather information and facts for a specific project which directly relates to their employment overseas, or conduct independent research
- take part in a formal exchange programme (eg where the University is collaborating with an overseas university on research and exchanges staff for some or all of the duration of the project) where their salary continues to be paid by their own institution
- share knowledge and experience or hold informal discussions with UK counterparts, but **not** conduct research on University hosted projects
- take part in research, teaching or clinical practice as an eminent senior doctor or dentist, provided this does not amount to filling a permanent teaching post.

### **In addition to the activities not permitted for a Standard Visitor visa holder, a Standard Visitor (academic) cannot:**

- collaborate with University staff on research projects (see guidance on Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange visa (T5))
- be retired
- be a named researcher on a grant
- be a sponsored researcher

### **Can we pay them?**

Academic Visitors cannot be paid from any UK source, except for reasonable travel and subsistence expenses.

### **How long can they stay in the UK?**

An Academic Visitor can apply in advance for a visa for up to 12 months. Non-visa nationals who arrive in the UK without having already obtained a visa will be limited to 6 months. Visa nationals must receive a visa before travelling regardless of the length of stay.

Dependants (spouses/partners and children) of Academic Visitors can apply for a Standard Visitor visa to come with the Academic Visitor to the UK for up to 6 or 12 months and will be subject to Standard Visitor visa restrictions. Where dependent children of Academic Visitors are coming to the UK for less than 12 months, they can't study at a state-funded school. However, if accompanying an Academic Visitor for 12 months, the restriction on studying at a state-funded school doesn't apply.

### **Can they extend the visa or switch to a new category?**

They can extend only as long as the total time they spend in the UK is less than 12 months (eg if they apply for a 6 month visa, they can apply to extend it for 6 more months). They can't switch to another visa category.

### **What's the process?**

Academic Visitors do not need visa sponsorship by the University, but will need a letter of invitation which can be provided by Faculty/Service Human Resources. Visa nationals and non-visa nationals visiting for more than 6 months, will have to apply in advance. Non-visa nationals coming to the UK for 6 months or less can choose to apply in advance or request a visa on arrival in the UK.

## **Standard Visitor (business)**

### **The main purpose of the visit might be to:**

- attend a conference, seminar, meeting, interview or training
- take part in discussions to secure funding for a project
- give a one-off or short series of talks and speeches, provided these aren't organised as commercial events and won't make a profit for the University

**Can we pay them?**

Business Visitors can't be paid from any UK source, except for reasonable expense and subsistence payments.

**How long can they stay in the UK?**

A maximum of 6 months.

**Can they extend the visa or switch to a new category?**

They can extend only as long as the total time they spend in the UK is less than 6 months (eg if they apply for a 3 month visa, they can apply to extend it for 3 more months). They can't switch to another visa category.

**What's the process?**

Business Visitors do not need visa sponsorship by the University, but will need a letter of invitation which can be provided by Faculty/Service Human Resources. Visa nationals and non-visa nationals visiting for more than 6 months, will have to apply in advance. Non-visa nationals coming to the UK for 6 months or less can choose to apply in advance or request a visa on arrival in the UK.

UKVI guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa>.



## 7. Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE)

This visa route is for those invited to the University as an expert in their profession.

### **PPE applicants must:**

- be formally invited by the University
- want to come to the UK to do specific paid work without having to be sponsored under the points-based visa system
- be over 18
- have enough money without help from public funds (state benefits) to support and house themselves (though, as the name suggests, we can pay them),
- be able to pay for their travel and leave the UK at the end of the visit.

Note that the maximum length of this visa is **1 month**.

### **The main purpose of the visit might be to:**

- be a student examiner or assessor
- take part in selection panels as a highly qualified academic
- give lectures, as long as it's not a part-time or full-time role
- as a professional artist or sportsperson, take part in arts, entertainment or sporting activities including broadcasting
- do minor activities related to your work or business overseas, such as attend meetings

### **PPE holders cannot:**

- do paid work unrelated to their main job or area of expertise at home, other than what's allowed by their visa
- extend this visa or switch to another visa
- live in the UK for extended periods
- get public funds (stated benefits)
- study
- marry or register a civil partnership, or give notice of marriage or civil partnership
- bring family members ('dependents') with them on their application - they must apply separately

### **Can we pay them?**

Yes, and there are no restrictions on the amount (though HR should advise on the appropriate level of payment).

### **How long can they stay in the UK?**

Up to one month.

### **Can they extend the visa or switch to a new category?**

No extensions are possible with this visa route, and they can't switch to another route while they're in the UK.

### **What's the process?**

No sponsorship by the University is necessary, but applicants will need a letter of invitation which can be provided by Faculty/Service Human Resources. Visa nationals and non-visa nationals visiting for more than 6 months, will have to apply in advance - they can do so and find more information [here](#). Non-visa nationals coming to the UK for 6 months or less can choose to apply in advance or request a visa on arrival in the UK.

UKVI guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/permitted-paid-engagement-visa>.

## 8. Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange (T5)

This immigration route is for “individuals coming to the United Kingdom through approved schemes that aim to share knowledge, experience and best practice.”

In practice, as a Higher Education Institution, we can use this route to sponsor 'researchers' (which includes academics, researchers, scientists, research engineers or other skilled research technology specialists) under the “UK Research and Innovation – Science, Research and Academia” scheme for a maximum of 2 years.

### The main purpose of their visit might be to:

- work with colleagues on a formal research project or collaboration
- develop their skills or take part in knowledge transfer
- carry out a series of lectures, as long as this doesn't amount to a formal teaching post
- act as an external examiner
- undertake a period of work-based training/work experience/internship/placement

### What are the criteria?

- They must not be filling a 'genuine vacancy', the role must be supernumerary (ie it's above your normal staffing requirements and, after they leave, no-one will be carrying on the role)
- The engagement must conform to UK employment legislation – in particular, the payment/funding they're receiving must meet UK National Minimum Wage (see “Can we pay them?” below)
- They can be funded by the University, by an overseas employer or an independent funding body, but they cannot be self-funded (this includes savings, loans, and financial assistance from friends and family)
- They don't need to be employed by an overseas institution to be eligible
- Any activity must be at or above RQF level 3 (AS/A level or equivalent) – note, this refers to the SOC code, not the qualification required by the University or held by an applicant. Speak to your HR hub to clarify if need be.

### Permitted activities

- do a second job for up to 20 hours per week if the job is listed in [Immigration Rules Appendix Shortage Occupation List](#) or if it is the same type of activity for which they are being sponsored by the University, as long as this is over and above the working hours detailed on the Certificate of Sponsorship
- study, though this can't be the main purpose of their visit and can't interfere with the hours and responsibilities on their Certificate of Sponsorship, and they may need an [ATAS certificate](#).

### They cannot:

- fill a 'genuine vacancy' (see “What are the criteria?” above)
- get access to public funds (state benefits)

### Can we pay them?

Yes. Funding for each engagement must meet [UK National Minimum Wage](#) (NMW) requirements<sup>2</sup>.

Funding can come from any source, including from the University or a third party, but the individual cannot fund themselves. Other than the NMW requirement, there are no restrictions – they can be paid weekly/monthly/annually or in one lump sum. To check the amount required, check [this at-a-glance calculations sheet](#).

HR should advise on the appropriate level of payment if this comes from the University.

### How long can they stay in the UK?

Up to 12 months for work-based training/work experience/internship/placement; otherwise up to 24 months.

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<sup>2</sup> If they're here to do work experience or an internship, UK legislation might mean that they wouldn't be entitled to the NMW. Further guidance is available [here](#).

**Can they extend the visa or switch to a new category?**

The visa can be extended, but only up to a maximum of 24 months. It is possible to switch to other immigration routes within the UK.

**What's the process?**

This visa route requires sponsorship by the University which can be arranged via Faculty/Service HR.

UKVI guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government-authorized-exchange>.